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No Soda at Lunch, District Votes

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Chicago, Ill.—Soft drinks will be banned from the lunch menu for high school students starting next fall in Naperville School District 203.

The school board voted 5–2 on Monday night to accept a recommendation from Supt. Alan Leis to phase out drinks with high fructose corn syrup. The district sells soft drinks to high school students at Naperville Central and Naperville North but does not sell them to pupils in its junior high and elementary schools.

Students will be able to buy only fruit juices, milk and water.

In response to a question from a board member, Leis said students still would be able to include soft drinks in homemade lunches.

The plan will not affect the sale of soft drinks at public events on nights and weekends in all 21 district schools. Leis proposed the lunch ban after a study group of parents and teachers recommended the move.

In discussions at the last two meetings, some board members have cast the issue as a matter of choice.

Others said the issue is a concern for the health of students and cited the district's physical education program that promotes exercise as a lifetime habit.

"I think kids see that we often teach best by backing up what we say with what we do," board President Dean Reschke said Monday.

Board member Suzyn Price, who has spoken against the proposal, said she visited Naperville North at lunch on Monday and found that soft drinks accounted for one-third of the beverages students were consuming.

"Our students have pretty healthy eating habits for adolescents and considering that, it reaffirms my firm belief that removing choices does not teach choice," she said.

The two student ambassadors to the school board, representing both high schools, opposed the soft-drink ban. Citing the right of students to vote, Naperville Central's Allison Funkhouser said it would be "foolish" to take away the choice of soft drinks.

In another matter, board members Tim Costello and Ann Staats announced they would not seek re-election in the spring.

Costello, 54, was elected to three terms, starting in 1993, and Staats, 51, was appointed to the board in 1999 and won a term in 2001.

Reschke and Debbie Shipley also are up for re-election, though they have not announced their intentions. Costello and Staats announced their retirements as the district opened the period for prospective candidates to pick up nominating petitions at the district office.

The filing deadline is Jan. 25, officials said.